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ZAMBIA

Statement by the Honourable William Harrington, Minister of Commerce, Trade and Industry

I would like to begin by endorsing the statements made by the Honourable Ministers of Tanzania and the Dominican Republic on behalf of SADC and ACP Member States, respectively.

On behalf of my delegation I express our deep appreciation to the United States Government for hosting us during this Conference and for the warm and comfortable hospitality.

As we meet here in Seattle at the dawn of the new millennium, to draw the agenda for the future work of the WTO and subsequent negotiations, we look forward to the positive conclusion of this meeting.

We must leave Seattle with a clear understanding of the operations of the WTO, which must allow for full and effective participation by all Members in its work and equitable sharing of benefits.

We acknowledge the important role placed by the WTO in fostering economic growth and development. We therefore, call for the safeguarding of the system against those who wish to undermine it by resorting to unilateral trade measures.

We also acknowledge the challenges brought about by the rapid liberalization and globalization of the world economy. As the process of liberalization continues to unfold, many of our economies, particularly developing nations of Africa, will continue to face tremendous difficulties in adjusting to the demands of this complex global process.

The task before us is therefore huge, requiring concerted efforts among nations.

Problems encountered by our countries have been raised at different fora and are reflected in the various proposals submitted during the preparatory process.

Zambia's main concerns remain those of addressing:

- The technical as well as institutional capacity to meet our obligations under the various WTO agreements;
- the imbalances that have become apparent during the course of implementation of the WTO agreements;
- the supply-side constraints; and
- the debt burden.

The initiatives undertaken by our governments to deal with some of these problems can only achieve their desired objectives if the international community especially the multilateral organizations, pursued policies that were mutually supportive to allow our government to adopt policy measures that are flexible.

This meeting will do well to place high on the agenda the development dimension of developing countries, if full and meaningful integration of these economies into the multilateral trading system is to be achieved.

Issues relating to market access, food security, technical cooperation and the special and differential treatments of least developed countries should be fully and favourably addressed.

I emphasize that improved market access would be meaningless if such issues as supply capacity and ability to meet technical requirements were not adequately addressed. Therefore, technical as well as financial assistance should be enhanced in this regard.

The effort by the six core agencies under the integrated framework of assistance for least developed countries should be made more effective in meeting some of these difficulties.

Zambia is committed to the process of liberalization and wants to see the results of this meeting lead to sincere commitment by all Members for a renewed partnership based on sustainable development and economic growth.

It is now five years since the Marrakesh meeting which established the WTO. Zambia has been a Member since then, but all our people have seen are statements and little else. Our exports have not increased in spite of economic reforms, which our country has seriously undertaken.

We have reduced tariffs, removed exchange controls among many other reforms. In spite of all these, our exports have shrunk and the economy declined.

Clearly therefore, being a Member of the WTO has not apparently benefited our people.

We believe that the WTO train may be moving too fast leaving countries like Zambia, a least developed country, behind.

Implementation of agreements is clearly deficient. Anti-dumping and subsidy policies and agreements must be looked at again to ensure they serve all Members fairly.

We support opening up trade and will give all support to the process of negotiations in the next round, but we want to be part of the process, on board the train. We do not want to be mere observers.

The difficulties in implementing agreements which we face can be resolved and indeed must be resolved in this respect.

Zambia as a least developed country welcomes sentiments in favour of market access for all products from least developed countries. We, however, urge that the sentiments must be followed by concrete action to ensure the realization of full integration of these countries into the multilateral trading system.

In this respect Zambia believes that the built-in agenda must be fully implemented, as should commitments to least-developed countries made at the WTO high level meeting in October 1997.

These commitments which include capacity building and technical assistance are critical if countries such as Zambia are to benefit from their membership of the WTO. We urge those who made commitments to honour the same.

We urge the further opening of trade in the agriculture, textile and leather sectors, as these are areas where most least developed countries have comparative advantage.

Zambia believes that even as trade in these areas is opened up technical support to least developed countries in improving standards of their products and developing capacity in sanitary and phyto-sanitary areas must be availed, so that these do not become non-tariff barriers to impede least developed country goods entering the export markets.

Regarding labour, Zambia supports the maintenance of core labour standards. We are of the view that while accepting that a working relationship between WTO and ILO is helpful, the body responsible for labour remains ILO.

On the issue of biotechnology and environment we feel that these are important subjects, but these should be dealt with in existing specialized fora, while the WTO concentrates on clearing the many issues outstanding in the trade area.

We support special and differential treatment insofar as this works to bring the developing countries into full partnership with the developed ones.

On electronic commerce, we support a stand-still posture until we are in a position to participate fully.

Regarding negotiations on new issues, we feel crowded and unprepared. We need time to study these so that we can participate from an informed position.

In conclusion Zambia welcomes progress made to allow China to become a full Member of the WTO. We hope others such as Russia and the thirty countries awaiting accession will soon become Members. This can only strengthen the WTO.
